

May 21, 2013

My name is Kathryn Morgan, I am a member of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

My Mother is Métis, her name is Veronica Lajimodiere, and her ancestry goes back to the Red River settlement.

Her brother, Harold Lajimodiere, is a World War 2 veteran, who served with the Essex Scottish Regiment out of Windsor, Ontario. He was with the Liberation forces in Holland.

In 1987, I traveled to Europe for a six month period of time.

My mother asked me to visit an area of Holland for my Uncle.

This is the exact wording of the letter she sent to me.

Dated- March 19, 1987

Dear Kathy:

I know Uncle Harold would like to go there so much, but we just can not go, Mama would go crazy with a rash if we both left the country at the same time. Uncle doesn't want to go alone. I hope you can see this and take a picture for him. He would be so happy.

Love Mom.

This is the information my Uncle, Harold Lajimodiere gave to me, (it was the first time he ever wrote to me and the first time he ever shared his experience with us.)

Kathee:

In England I was stationed at Aldershot at a camp above the hill at Hazelmere between London and Portsmouth.

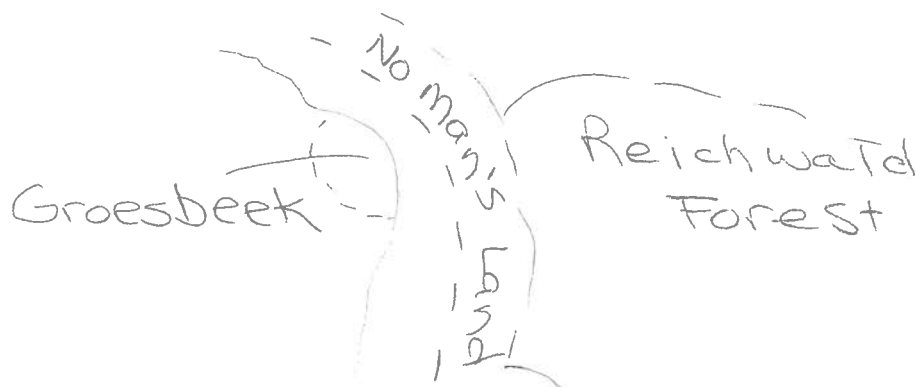
We sailed from Portsmouth and landed at Ostend. (I stayed at the Motropole Hotel in Brussels right near the Gare de Nord.) Went by truck to Ghent where we were stationed at Caserne Leopold, a military fort.

From there we went thru Antwerp thru Bergen up Zoom to Middelburg on Walcheren Island.

From there to a small town about 5 miles east of Malines.

Then thru Breda, Tilburg, S'Hertogenbosch to Niymegan arriving about 1st of December 1944, at the time of Battle of the Bulge we were pulled out and spent New Years at a town called Boxtel, south of S'Hertogenbosch.

In the Nijmegen area we stayed at Groesbeek, it looks I think like this.



From some houses on the hill we could look down on the forest from the north.

When we broke out we went thru Cleve and made an attack at the Goch Calcar Crossroads. Later again at the Hochwald forest and again at Xanten.

Later we crossed the Rhine and went thru Gronigen and Dadenburj and ended up about 28 km from Wilhelms Haven.

Xanten is an old Roman fort that was established to keep the people east of the Rhine from interfering with the Empire.

If you go to Nijmegen try to take a picture looking east from Groesbeek. It's on a hill and should be easy to do.

Between there and the Reichwald Forest is a little town in the valley, I think Kranewburg. We spent Christmas day there with German soldiers across the street. We use to throw grenades out the upstairs window so at night they wouldn't lay explosives against the wall of the church we were in. That kept them on the other side of the street.

I'm proud to say that I did visit this area, and found the hill my Uncle described. This is an excerpt from my travel journal dated August 18, 1987.

Woke up to rain, the open-air museum is out, decided to stay another night. Think we will go to Nijmegen today, the Liberation museum is indoors. Took the train to Nijmegen from there a bus to Groesbeek, the bus it let us off just by the museum. When we entered I asked the woman at the front desk if she knew of the hill my Uncle was talking about. She directed me to the Museum director, who informed me the Canadian cemetery was located on the hill. He was very happy to meet us, and gave my Uncle his regards. He also told me to pass this message onto him "Thanks for coming". I was very touched by this statement, I felt the importance of the Canadian forces. We began the tour looking at a few posters dedicated to the Canadians. Most of the explanations were in Dutch, so we were mostly looking at pictures. I was trying to find my uncle in a picture, no luck. There was a special building dedicated to the men who died or were wounded or were missing in action. This was called the Hall of Honour.

I took pictures of Uncle's emblem from the Essex Scottish Regiment. When I approached the front desk, the woman gave me a booklet to give to my Uncle, she also asked me to sign the book. I did this with Uncle's name underneath mine.

I bought a few postcards for him. (These postcards, when put together, mapped out the camp site of the Canadian soldiers, like a jigsaw puzzle. They were so accurate; my Uncle was able to pick out his tent.)

From the museum we walked to the Canadian cemetery, it was a mile away this was quite emotional, the graves of the men who lost their lives, some were only 19 or 20 years old. I took pictures facing east, to fulfil my Uncle's request. The cemetery was so well kept, many flowers, plants and a huge cross.

I later wrote to my uncle about my experience, and sent him all the postcards and information I gathered.

My Uncle was proud to be a Veteran. He lived in Saskatchewan, however, he would often come to Toronto to march in the Veteran's parade at the Canadian National Exhibition. I remember seeing him, dressed in his blue blazer with his medals on his chest marching so honourably.

Kathy Morgan